DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 483 CG 027 010

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TITLE	CAMCRY: An Innovation in Collaborative Program Development.
INSTITUTION	Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation, Ottawa (Ontario).; ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Student Services, Greensboro, NC.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	EDO-CG-95-43
PUB DATE	95
CONTRACT	RR93002004
NOTE	4p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Advisory Committees; *Cooperative Programs; *Counseling; Counseling Services; Foreign Countries; Program Development; Program Evaluation; Program Implementation; Research and Development; *Youth
IDENTIFIERS	Canada

ABSTRACT

The CAMCRY (Creation and Mobilization of Counselling Resources for Youth) initiative was created in response to the large numbers of young people in need of career development assistance in Canada during the late 1980s. These groups included out-of-school youth, youth with special needs, underemployed youth, youth at risk of leaving school, and those in school without a sense of career/life direction. CAMCRY included 41 distinct projects at 18 colleges and universities across Canada, each project meeting numerous criteria: 50-50 funding (half from government and half from elsewhere), innovation, practicality, emphasis on young people, and containing rigorous field test and evaluation components. Some projects targeted professionals who work with youth, while the majority focused on youth themselves. Organizers learned that: (1) Collaboration (both in planning and operation) takes significant time; (2) Marketing is important; (3) Field test data are important but are not enough; and (4) Advisory committees can be helpful. Several elements are discussed which would enhance the initiative were it possible to do again. These elements include: (1) building a solid vision statement early to focus the advisory committee and provide cohesive direction to the projects; (2) building into the master plan ample time for implementation and mobilization; (3) recognizing that a training program is as important as the program for youth; (4) recognizing that consultants are necessary in program development; (5) providing ample support for evaluation; and (6) planning and budgeting for "spin off" events. (RB)

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CAMCRY: An Innovation in Collaborative Program Development

An ERIC Digest

by Bryan Hiebert & M. Lynne Bezanson

1995

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An Innovation In Collaborative Program Development

Bryan Hiebert & M. Lynne Bezanson

Overview

In the late 1980s, career development in Canada reached a crossroads. The myth of one-career-for-life had been shattered. The semi-skilled and unskilled labor force was shrinking. Approximately one-in-three adolescents were leaving school before graduation even though the age range for entry education/training levels for new jobs was climbing to 15-17 years (Hiebert, Jarvis, Bezanson, Ward, & Hearn, 1992). Many young people were slipping through cracks in the system. These were out-of-school youth, youth with special needs, underemployed youth, and youth at risk of leaving school. Even adolescents who chose to remain in school, often finished with no sense of career/life direction. It was in this social context that CAMCRY was born.

CAMCRY (Creation And Mobilization of Counselling Resources for Youth) was a $15,400,000 Program Development and Research initiative, funded with $7.4 million from Human Resources Development Canada (then called Employment and Immigration Canada), and $8 million from universities, colleges, provincial government,and business. The Canadian Guidance and Counselling Foundation (CGCF) was chosen to coordinate the initiative. Each project met numerous criteria: 50-50 funding, innovation, practical, emphasis on young people, and had to contain rigorous field test and evaluation components (Hiebert, 1992). Some projects targeted professionals who work with youth and included a training component for professionals, while the majority focused on youth themselves. When finished, CAMCRY included 41 distinct projects at 18 colleges and universities across Canada and involved over 200 researchers, four times as many reasearchers as before the project began. This made CAMCRY the largest research and program development counseling project ever undertaken in Canada.

CAMCRY: An Innovation In Collaboration

CAMCRY was built on collaboration (see Hiebert, 1992).

Collaboration In Planning

- 200 letters were sent to colleges, universities, governments, and individuals, inviting them to participate.
- Three working meetings were held to develop proposals.
- Instead of competition, organizers encouraged collaboration with interested parties to develop a good proposal.
- The final budget request was based on the accumulated amount of all proposals submitted—when the award was less than requested, collaborators revised budgets.

This collaborative approach contrasts with the usual one where proposals are reviewed anonymously: some "win" and get funded and the rest "lose."

Collaboration In Operation

The operating structure of CAMCRY was collaborative.

- In order to keep programs career focused, reality-based, and practical, program consultants assisted projects with program development, career information, and administration.
- In the early stages of program development, a specifications conference guided by a leading expert of the project's choice, provided feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- The specifications conference was unanimously viewed as beneficial.

Collaboration In Mobilization

As program development came to completion, CGCF assisted projects with implementation plans: (a) marketing programs to potential users; (b) securing publishers for the materials; (c) assisting with conference and workshop presentations and (d) helping prepare training workshops so that practitioners and potential adopters would get hands-on training in the new methods.

CAMCRY: What We Learned

Everyone agreed that although the finished project was bigger in scope than anyone originally dreamed, it was also richer because of collaboration with CGCF staff, other project directors, and publishers.

Collaboration Takes Time

- CAMCRY was three years in the planning, three years in program development, and two years in mobilization.
- Implementing a new program takes as much time as developing the program.
- To help a new program become incorporated in the field, it is important to identify advocates for the program, people who can influence program adoption, early adopters, and people who make curriculum decisions.
- Implementation needs to be conceptualized as part of the project and built into the time line and budget.

It Is Important To Market

University and college instructors produce excellent programs, but many educators need assistance in marketing their materials. This involves reframing marketing to give it an educational focus, providing the opportunity to improve service

by using new methods.

- Program developers need to market their programs to schools, publishers, professionals, and potential future funders through conference presentations and workshops.
- The marketing success of CAMCRY is evidenced by the fact that over 30 programs have been published, numerous articles have appeared in professional journals, and eight provinces are currently using CAMCRY programs.

Field Test Data Are Important But Are Not Enough

Strong field test data supported all CAMCRY projects. Many projects also demonstrated success in multiple sites across the country. The data included a combination of learning outcomes and traditional measures (career maturity, locus of control, self-esteem). *But*, field test data are not enough; they do not speak for themselves. The bottom line for most publishers was the potential number of units that could be sold and strong field test results were only one small part of the market decision.

Advisory Committees Can Be Helpful

CAMCRY had local advisory committees as well as a National advisory committee.

- Local advisory committees composed of experts, practitioners, and young people helped guide program development, assisted with field testing, identified potential markets, and helped programs maintain a realistic outlook.
- The National CAMCRY Advisory Committee consisted of 14 professional associations, businesses, and federal, provincial, and municipal government departments. It provided direction in three primary areas: communications, training, and standards

CAMCRY: What Would We Do Differently?

CAMCRY was a first in Canada, and as such, everyone involved was "learning on the run." The project has been enormously successful, but there are elements which would enhance the initiative a second time around.

1. Build a solid vision statement early to focus the advisory committee and to provide cohesive direction to the projects:

- Ownership and commitment increase if the vision statement is developed collaboratively and involves all participants.
- The vision statement provides the framework and impetus for action by advisory committee members.
- The vision statement helps each project see how it is part of a larger picture.

2. Build into the master plan ample time for implementation and mobilization:

- Launch the communication/marketing strategy early—it took two-person years of time to secure publishers.
- It takes time to build awareness of a major initiative, but awareness can cultivate readiness for program adoption.
- Program developers need help marketing their work and it takes time to teach them how to do this.

3. A training component is as important as the program for youth.

- Establishing a solid training network took one person a year.
- Training is an important mobilization tool.
- Projects that incorporated teacher/counselor training in their program development were the fastest to become published and used.
- Provinces will support training, but it takes time to establish an infrastructure.

4. Consultants are necessary in program development:

- Few resources view program development, implementation, and evaluation as integrated parts of a total picture.
- Academics are unaccustomed to program development and a "hands on" collaborative form of granting.
- It is necessary to have coaching on program content and a program development focus, versus a pure research focus.

5. Provide ample support for evaluation:

- Projects with strong data support were published first.
- Academics have difficulty breaking away from traditional standardized measures and pre/post designs, and they may overlook informal assessment, check lists, skill demonstrations, self-monitoring logs, and alternative designs.

6. Plan and budget for "spin off" events:

- In a major initiative, unanticipated events can enrich a project, provided there is time and money to pursue them.
- Quality Service Workbook (see Bezanson, 1995) was a logical extension of CAMCRY and an asset to service delivery.
- The Survey of Career and Employment Counseling in Canada (see Hiebert & Conger, 1995) was fostered by work arising from CAMCRY.

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